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The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Solraab and Rustan

MATTHEW ARMOUR

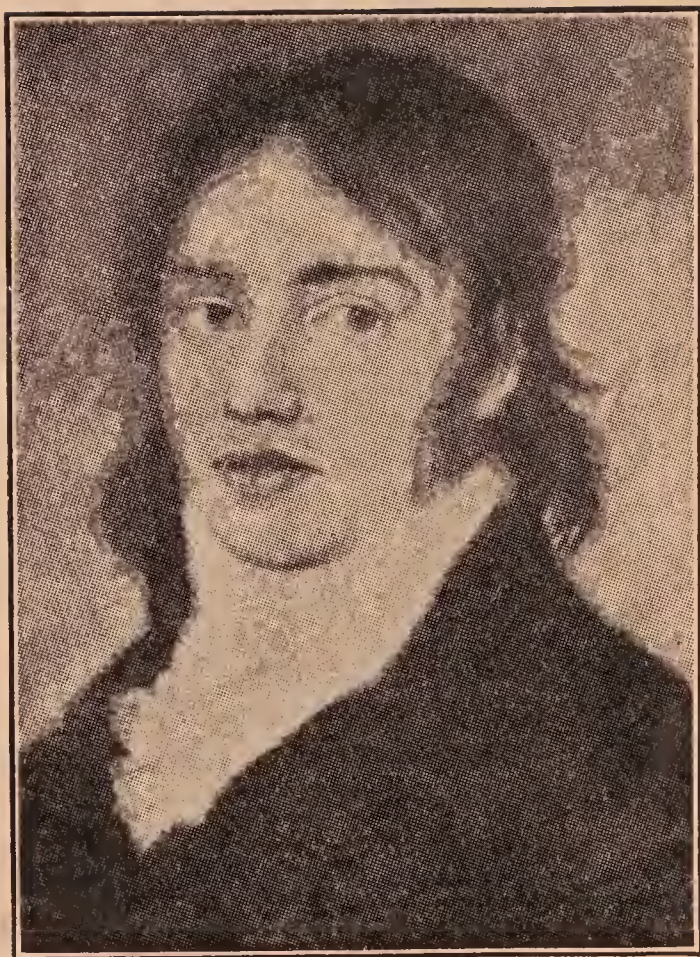


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COLERIDGE AT 26

THE WESTERN SERIES OF ENGLISH AND

AMERICAN CLASSICS

The
Rime of the Ancient
Mariner

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

AND

Sohrab and Rustum

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD

EDITED BY

LUCILE GAFFORD, PH. D.

The University of Chicago

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To
M. L. L.

PREFATORY NOTE

This little volume brings together two of the longer English poems usually put on the reading lists for high school students. The poems are vital examples of English narrative verse and should be interesting to young students as illustrating distinctly different types of creative writing. It is hoped that the study of them will stimulate further search into the forms of poetry in the very rich field of English literature.

In the case of both poems the text used is that which received the author's approval and final revision; the *Ancient Mariner* based on the edition of 1829, *Sohrab and Rustum* on the text of the 1878 issue of Arnold's poems.

L. G.

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COLERIDGE COTTAGE, NETHER STOWEY

SKETCH OF COLERIDGE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the youngest of thirteen children, was born at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, October 21, 1772. Little is known of his childhood and youth except what is gained from some of his letters late in life. One rather important fact is that his father was a vicar, for that implies a library and respect for learning and accounts at least in part for the boy's later tastes. His first teacher was his father, from whose care the child went at six to the local grammar school. When he was about nine his father died, and the boy was sent away to a public charity school in London, where he became the friend of another poor boy destined to be one of the gentlest and quaintest prose writers of his day—Charles Lamb. Lamb has made a charming, and quite naturally, slightly exaggerated picture of the precocious fellow Coleridge in his essay "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago." Even there the appeal of his voice was recognized and the philosophic tendency of his mind foreshadowed.

At nineteen Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, where he studied the traditional subjects. He planned to enter the ministry, probably because it promised a way to continued study at leisure. But he was not an all-round scholar; he disliked mathematics and pure science, and in literature turned his attention largely to a study of writers of his own day. Toward the end of his third year in college he grew distressed over debts and depressed with study, and broke away from school for a trial of life in London. Soon after he enlisted in the army, only to find himself totally unable to do the things which that life required, and glad after two months to return to the Uni-

versity. At last he left Cambridge in 1794 without taking a degree.

After leaving school his restless mind entered upon a series of projects, none of very long **endurance** or of any vital consequence. At one time he planned with his school friend Southey to go to America and establish an ideal state in which a Utopian life was to give each man his chance to develop his highest intellectual ability with the least obtrusion of material concern. As a part of the ideal scheme the two poets married, and the stern business of making a living put an end to the dream.

The young man had counted upon an income from poems, the first volume of which, called *Juvenile Poems*, he published soon after his marriage; but he found it necessary to do more, and soon tried in turn preaching, lecturing and publishing. There are eloquent evidences from his admirers as to his charm and persuasiveness as a preacher as there are of his earlier charm as a conversationalist in college where his room was a rendezvous for the best thinkers and talkers among the students. This faculty he never lost.

Early in 1797 Coleridge moved into a small cottage in the village of Nether Stowey, in the Quantock hills where within a month Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy became his neighbors. Friendship grew rapidly between the two poets and each wrote and grew under the other's stimulation. Within a year they planned a trip whose expense they meant to meet by publishing a joint volume which they talked over at length. The plan and its results have been told in Wordsworth's now famous *Preface* to their volume, and further in Coleridge's later book *The Biographia Literaria*.

This volume, called *Lyrical Ballads* and published in

1798, contained the greatest of Coleridge's conceptions in verse, *The Ancient Mariner*, and three shorter poems. Coleridge remembered a dream told him by his friend Cruikshank—"of a skeleton ship with figures in it." Wordsworth added some suggestions from his recent reading of travel literature—and the idea grew. But Coleridge's mind ran far ahead of Wordsworth's with the theme and soon they agreed that this poem should be his alone. Only a few lines in the completed poem came from Wordsworth.

The *Lyrical Ballads* marks one of the high spots in the history of English literature for in it for the first time were expressed completely the ideals which the poets who were trying to break away from the formalism of the eighteenth century were striving for in less effectual ways. These ideas they summed up in the phrase "a return to nature"—by which they meant truthfulness to nature in her objective forms and sincerity in expressing the heart of man. The *Lyrical Ballads* does both of these things, and has thus become the first great achievement of the "romantic movement" which characterized the literary effort of the early nineteenth century.

The year following this venture was a happy one for the poet friends. Late in the year Coleridge came into some money and made a long desired trip to Germany to study the new philosophy of transcendentalism developing there under Kant and Schelling. This was to be an interest through the rest of his life, and the self-appointed career of teaching its ideals to England began upon his return.

But the most gloomy chapter in Coleridge's life also began soon after his return to England and to his new home in the Lake country. Dampness in

the climate brought on neuralgia and he began the fatal custom of taking opium to relieve the pain. The next ten years are a dark sequel; the habit grew worse steadily and all his efforts in writing, editing and lecturing ended in half-success and finally in failures. Nothing is more pathetic than his voluntarily putting himself under the care of his friend, Dr. Gilman, who became after 1814 his constant guardian.

Through the twenty years of life left to him he continued in his lucid moments to be to a host of younger men a prophet and seer leading them into the light of the new philosophy. Among his followers none paid a higher tribute than Thomas Carlyle, whose words sum up his greatness to his own age, and record him for us:

. a sublime man; who, alone in those dark days had saved his crown of spiritual manhood; The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer. But to the rising spirits of the younger generation, he had this dusky sublime character; and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma.

This was the man who dreamed and executed the *Ancient Mariner*.

COMMENT ON THE ANCIENT MARINER

The Ancient Mariner may be classified for convenience as a long narrative poem, standing between the brief narration of a single moment and the longer record of epic struggles. But it is far from being merely a story in verse—good as it might be, judged as the tale of a weird experience. Through an artistry such as few English poets can command Coleridge has in this poem brought us under the unearthly spell of the mariner's tale and made us feel the subtle connection between the old sailor's strange adventure and the experience of the human heart. This ability to see beyond the mere facts of life into the meaning they have belongs to the great poets and dramatists of literature. They become interpreters of life and their productions are demonstrations of the ways of the human spirit.

The poem demands more than a single reading. Its details are wonderfully fused into a strikingly harmonious whole, yet it is possible to look into its elements and find that study only enhances the central and single impression.

First to attract the reader, perhaps, is the story itself—the record of happenings. We see the ship leave the harbor and begin its wild and incredible voyage. Soon we lose a sense of a course such as any known mariner ever sailed; we are concerned with the vastness of the ocean universe, bounded only by the poles and the lines that belt the earth. We go south, to be sure, but we meet with objects nobody else ever saw, and we find our ship controlled by great and elemental spirits whose activities extend to more than ships and sailors. Finally—and much comes before that ending—we get back to harbor and to the world of men where an

old sailor goes about trying to tell men the truth he has learned about life.

This journey has involved the conflict of tremendous spiritual forces, and the poem is a record of that, too. The poem gives us a key to this spiritual experience in the stanza near the end "He prayeth best who loveth best," but the experience from which this summary emerges is too subtle to be put adequately into a phrase. We ask questions—What was involved in the shooting of the bird? What caused it finally to fall from the Mariner's neck? How much had the Guardian Spirit to do with his release and how much of it was due to the change in his own heart? How does all this relate to the soul of man and the facts and forces he must meet in daily life? Fortunately we need not answer these questions, but they are stimulating to think about.

Then there is the form of the poem. In metrical pattern it is indebted to the old ballads; but the variations from this pattern attract us on almost every page. Coleridge takes the liberties which only an artist may with the pattern he has chosen. He expands the stanzas by adding single lines, by unusual repetitions of word and phrase and whole line, by altering the length of the traditional line, even by doubling the length of the stanza. He uses alliteration with varied effects among the parts; he employs internal rhyme as freely as a lyric poet; he turns away from the traditional iambic foot of the ballad and occasionally employs three kinds of foot in one stanza. Finally he uses the diction of the old ballad, its simplicity and its directness, and he keeps us in the atmosphere of the long-ago by these means; but his poem is as richly colored in sound quality as it is varied in line order.

All of this and more goes into making this dream-

poem one of the great pieces of English Literature and brings us back to it with new wonder at each re-reading. It is hoped that the notes and questions attached will help young readers to ask more questions and to stimulate attention to more of the details of the fashioning of *The Ancient Mariner*.

QUESTIONS AND STUDY HELPS

- I. On the basis of *The Ancient Mariner* try to make a definition of a lyrical ballad.
- II. Try to tell the story in one paragraph of prose. Why is that difficult?
- III. What human characters come into the poem?
- IV. Mark parts in the poem you think particularly striking in pictorial quality; select one for detailed representation and try to visualize it as on a canvas.
- V. Try to fill out the picture of the wedding feast. Do you care much for the feast as such?
- VI. Try to chart the course of the ship.
- VII. Comment on the function and value of the marginal glosses (added by Coleridge in later editions).
- VIII. Discuss the diction of the poem.
- IX. Make a study of color words; how large a part does color play in the effects of the poem? What colors are employed?
- X. Note the points at which Coleridge reminds you of the presence of the wedding guest.
- XI. What, finally, seems to you the most artistic feature of the poem?

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

PART THE FIRST

I

It is an ancient Mariner,¹
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long gray beard and glittering
eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

An ancient
Mariner
meeteth
three Gal-
lants bid-
den to a
wedding-
feast, and
detaineth
one.

II

The Bridegroom's doors are opened
wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

III

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons² his hand dropt he.

¹Note how directly the mariner is introduced. Who describes him here? Notice how in these stanzas the contrast is established—of the wedding feast which we hear about and which we nearly share as its noises float out to us, and of the old mariner on the roadside stopping the guests to pour out his tale.

²Immediately. It is from two Anglo-Saxon words *eft*, "again," and *sona*, "at once," "soon." It is used here as many archaic words are throughout the poem to suggest an earlier time.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
is spell-
bound by
the eye of
the old sea-
faring man,
and con-
strained to
hear his
tale.

IV

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.³

V

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose⁴ but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

VI

'The ship was cheered,⁵ the harbour
cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mar-
iner tells
how the
ship sailed
southward
with a good
wind and
fair weath-
er, till it
reached the
Line.

VII

The sun came up upon the left,⁶
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

³The full meaning of this stanza is reserved till stanzas CXXXIII and CXXXIV when we have come under the spell of the old sailor and realize fully how powerful and impelling his manner is, and how speech has to him still the value of a confession.

⁴Watch for other cases in which Coleridge employs two tenses, and see what effect he gains. "Spake" in the next line is another old form used to keep the atmosphere.

⁵The story begins; see how much is covered in one stanza.

⁶Which way was the ship going?

VIII

Higher and higher every day,
 'Till over the mast at noon—'
 The Wedding-Guest here beat his
 breast,
 For he heard the loud bassoon.'

IX

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she;⁸
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest
 heareth the
 bridal
 music; but
 the Mariner
 continueth
 his tale.

X

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

XI

'And now the Storm-Blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong:
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.

The ship
 drawn by a
 storm to-
 ward the
 south pole.

XII

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 And southward aye we fled.⁹

⁷An old wind instrument still used. These lines recall us to the immediate scene again.

⁸This is a pure ballad line, as is the last one of the stanza.

⁹The added lines and the internal rhymes intensify the idea of pursuit.

XIII

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

XIV

The land of
 ice, and of
 fearful
 sounds,
 where no
 living thing
 was to be
 seen.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts¹⁰
 Did send a dismal sheen:
 Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken¹¹—
 The ice was all between.

XV

The ice was here, the ice was there,
 The ice was all around:
 It cracked and growled, and roared and
 howled,
 Like noises in a swound!¹²

Till a great
 sea-bird,
 called the
 Albatross,
 came
 through the
 snow-fog,
 and was re-
 ceived with
 great joy
 and hospi-
 tality.

XVI

At length did cross an Albatross:
 Thorough¹³ the fog it came;
 As if it had been a Christian soul,
 We hailed it in God's name.

¹⁰Cliffs—the walls of icebergs towering above them. “Drifts” suggest masses of floating mist or clouds, showing the ice walls here and there.

¹¹An old word still used in Scotland—“to know.”

¹²*Swoon*—This last line makes the noises mentioned above seem strange and ghost-like.

¹³Old form of *through*. See its use by Shakespeare, notably in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

XVII

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,¹⁴
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
 The helmsman steered us through!

XVIII

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
 The Albatross did follow,
 And every day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

And lo! the
 Albatross
 proveth a
 bird of good
 omen, and
 followeth
 the ship as
 it returned
 northward
 through fog
 and floating
 ice.

XIX

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perched for vespers nine;
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke
 white
 Glimmered the white moon-shine.'

XX

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From the fiends, that plague thee
 thus!—
 Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-
 bow
 I shot the Albatross.¹⁵

The ancient
 Mariner
 inhospita-
 bly killeth
 the pious
 bird of good
 omen.

¹⁴Pronounced *et* and good usage till very recent times.

¹⁵A very dramatic moment. The mariner has been leading up to this revelation, yet putting it off, because telling it is a penance hard to make even so long after the event. Note how the Guest's words here suggest the terror he sees in the mariner's face.

PART THE SECOND

XXI

The Sun now rose upon the right:¹
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

XXII

And the good south wind still blew
behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

XXIII

His ship-
mates cry
out against
the ancient
Mariner,
for killing
the bird of
good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,²
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

XXIV

But when
the fog
cleared off,
they justify
the same,
and thus
make them-
selves ac-
complices
in the
crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to
slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

¹What direction now?

²This whole stanza is an indirect statement of the charge the mates brought against the mariner. Their veering, half-mad minds are further suggested in the next stanza.

XXV

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
 The furrow followed free;
 We were the first that ever burst
 Into that silent sea.

The fair
 breeze con-
 tinues; the
 ship enters
 the Pacific
 Ocean and
 sails north-
 ward, even
 till it
 reaches the
 Line.

XXVI

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
 'Twas sad as sad could be;
 And we did speak only to break
 The silence of the sea!

The ship
 hath been
 suddenly
 becalmed.

XXVII

All in a hot and copper sky,
 The bloody Sun, at noon,
 Right up above the mast did stand,
 No bigger than the Moon.⁴

XXVIII

Day after day, day after day,
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
 As idle as a painted ship
 Upon a painted ocean.

³Excellent use of alliteration in these two lines. Note how often Coleridge employs this feature of the old ballads. The next stanza is more artistic in its use than this one, with d's and s's blending.

⁴A physical fact; the rarified air made objects stand out just as they were. These two stanzas are hardly surpassed in literature for the clear-cut picture they present. cf. ll. 171-80, 199-200, 263-71, 314-26.

XXIX

And the
Albatross
begins to be
avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,⁵
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

XXX

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs⁶
Upon the slimy sea.

XXXI

About, about,⁷ in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

A spirit had
followed
them; one
of the in-
visible in-
habitants of
this planet,
neither de-
parted souls
nor angels;

XXXII

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

⁵Note other uses of repetition. This stanza has been repeated carelessly so often it has lost some of its effect. It is full of suggestion if read with the context: cf. stanza LIV, where the larger vowel sounds aid in building a sense of desolation we miss here.

⁶Note how one gets the feeling for these hideous objects where the mariner can give them no names—as if they were unnameable.

⁷cf. *Macbeth* I, iii, 33.

XXXIII

The ship-
mates in
their sore
distress
would fain
throw the
whole guilt
on the an-
cient Mar-
iner: in sign
whereof
they hang
the dead
sea-bird
round his
neck.

And every tongue, through utter
drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot. '

XXXIV

Ah! well-a-day!⁸ what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

⁸Old usage. cf. "The Eve of St. Agnes," Stanza XIII.

PART THE THIRD

XXXV

The ancient
Mariner be-
holdeth a
sign in the
element
afar off.

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye!
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

XXXVI

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist!¹

XXXVII

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

XXXVIII

At its
nearer ap-
proach, it
seemeth
him to be a
ship; and
at a dear
ransom
he freeth
his speech
from the
bonds of
thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips
baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

¹Coleridge here uses a form of the Anglo-Saxon verb *witan*, "to know," but he evidently means it to be equivalent to *iwis*, an adverb meaning "certainly." Old ballads use these forms *iwis* and *wist* carelessly, popularly.

XXXIX

With throats unslaked, with black lips
 baked,
 Agape they heard me call:
 Gramercy! they for joy did grin,²
 And all at once their breath drew in,
 As they were drinking all.

A flash of
 joy.

XL

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
 Hither to work us weal;
 Without a breeze, without a tide,
 She steadies with upright keel!

And horror
 follows. For
 can it be a
ship that
 comes on-
 ward with-
 out wind or
 tide?

XLI

The western wave was all a-flame,
 The day was well-nigh done!
 Almost upon the western wave
 Rested the broad bright Sun;
 When that strange shape drove³ sud-
 denly
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

XLII

And straight the Sun was flecked with
 bars,
 (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
 As if through a dungeon-grate he
 peered
 With broad and burning face.

It seemeth
 him but the
 skeleton of
 a ship.

²Very effective word here to suggest faces distorted by thirst.

³A striking effect is gained by this word. Get the picture of the sudden image.

XLIII

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat
loud,)

How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the
Sun,

Like restless gossameres?⁴

And its ribs
are seen as
bars on the
face of the
setting Sun.
The Spec-
tre-Woman
and her
Death-
mate, and
no other on
board the
skeleton-
ship.

XLIV

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

XLV

Like vessel, Her lips were red, her looks were free,
like crew! Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,⁵
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Death and
Life-in-
Death have
diced for
the ship's
crew, and
she (the
latter) win-
neth the
ancient
Mariner.

XLVI

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won, I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

⁴A dictionary will tell an interesting story of the origin of this word.

⁵Do you know other witch-creatures in literature? This is a vivid and startling picture of the creatures who inhabit the phantom ship. Note, in the next stanza, that this terrible creature wins the mariner and thus reserves him for a worse fate than death.

XLVII

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:⁶
 At one stride comes the dark;
 With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
 Off shot the spectre-bark.

No twilight
 within the
 courts of
 the Sun.

XLVIII

We listened and looked sideways up!
 Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
 My life-blood seemed to sip!
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,
 The steersman's face by his lamp
 gleamed white;
 From the sails the dew did drip—
 Till clomb above the eastern bar
 The hornéd Moon, with one bright star
 Within the nether tip.

At the ris-
 ing of the
 Moon.

XLIX

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
 Too quick for groan or sigh,
 Each turned his face with a ghastly
 pang,
 And cursed me with his eye.

One after
 another,

⁶Very concrete imagery, and a sense of almost breathless quickness in the physical changes involved. The "courts of the sun" are the tropics.

⁷One of the most remarkable stanzas in the poem. Its unusual length gives a retarded effect to the narrative, while its images, notably that in the second and third lines, are rich with poetic meaning.

L

His ship-
mates drop
down dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,⁸
They dropped down one by one.

LI

But Life-
in-Death
begins her
work on the
ancient
Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

⁸Note the staccato effect of these two commonplace words
—they suggest exactly what the speaker means.

PART THE FOURTH

LII

'I fear' thee ancient Mariner,
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wedding-Guest
feareth
that a
Spirit is
talking to
him;

LIII

I fear thee, and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

But the an-
cient Mar-
iner assur-
eth him of
his bodily
life, and
proceedeth
to relate his
horrible
penance.

LIV

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

LV

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.²

He despis-
eth the
creatures
of the calm.

LVI

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away:
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

And envi-
eth that
they should
live, and so
many lie
dead.

¹What did he fear? The mariner knew; cf. last line of the next stanza.

²Part of the horror of being won by life-in-death.

LVII

I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;
 But or³ ever a prayer had gusht
 A wicked whisper came, and made
 My heart as dry as dust.

LVIII

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
 And the balls like pulses beat;
 For the sky and the sea, and the sea
 and the sky⁴
 Lay like a load on my weary eye,
 And the dead were at my feet.

LIX

But the
 curse liveth
 for him in
 the eye of
 the dead
 men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
 Nor rot nor reek did they:
 The look with which they looked on me
 Had never passed away.

LX

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
 A spirit from on high;
 But oh! more horrible than that
 Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
 Seven days, seven nights,⁵ I saw that
 curse,
 And yet I could not die.

³This is a variant of the Old English *aor*, meaning "before."

⁴The length of this line is very effective, with its feverish repetition.

⁵Much more impressive than saying "a whole week." Note the stress again on the life-in-death curse.

LXI

The moving Moon went up the sky,
 And nowhere did abide:
 Softly she was going up,
 And a star or two beside—

In his loneliness and
 fixedness he
 yearneth
 towards the
 journeying
 Moon, and
 the stars
 that still

LXII

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
 Like April hoar-frost spread;
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
 The charmed water burnt always
 A still and awful red.

sojourn, yet
 still move
 onward;
 and every-
 where the
 blue sky be-
 longs to
 them, and is
 their ap-
 pointed rest,
 and their
 native

country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

LXIII

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
 I watched the water-snakes:
 They moved in tracks of shining white,
 And when they reared, the elfish light
 Fell off in hoary flakes.

By the light
 of the Moon
 he behold-
 eth God's
 creatures of
 the great
 calm.

LXIV

Within^e the shadow of the ship
 I watched their rich attire:
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
 They coiled and swam; and every track
 Was a flash of golden fire.

^eContrast the picture in this stanza—with the preceding one.

LXV

Their
beauty and
their happi-
ness.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,⁷
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

He blesseth
them in his
heart.

LXVI

The spell
begins to
break.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

⁷The charm is broken, the curse lifted and he sees the beauty of every living form. With the return of sympathy he can pray and find relief.

PART THE FIFTH

LXVII

Oh sleep!¹ it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

LXVIII

The silly² buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

By grace of
the holy
Mother, the
ancient
Mariner is
refreshed
with rain.

LXIX

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

LXX

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

¹Can you recall other apostrophes to sleep? Poets of all ages are fond of proclaiming the healing beneficence of sleep. cf. *Macbeth*, II, ii, 37-41, 2 *Henry IV*, III, i, 5-31, Keats' *Endymion*, I, 453-63, several sonnets, and Coleridge's *The Pains of Sleep*.

²Useless.

He heareth
sounds
and seeth
strange
sights and
commo-
tions in the
sky and the
element.

LXXI

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails
That were so thin and sere.

LXXII

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.³

LXXIII

And the coming wind did roar more
loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one
black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

LXXIV

The thick black cloud was cleft, and
still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,⁴
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

LXXV

The bodies
of the ship's
crew are
inspired,
and the
ship moves
on.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

³Note the words which suggest rapid motion, and how they give lightness to the mood.

⁴Is this a good figure?

LXXVI

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
 Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
 It had been strange, even in a dream,
 To have seen those dead men rise.

LXXVII

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on
 Yet never a breeze up-blew;
 The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
 Where they were wont to do:
 They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
 We were a ghastly crew.

LXXVIII

The body of my brother's son
 Stood by me, knee to knee:
 The body and I pulled at one rope
 But he said naught to me.

LXXIX

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
 Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
 'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
 Which to their corses came again,
 But a troop of spirits blest:

But not by
 the souls of
 the men,
 nor by
 demons of
 earth or
 middle air,
 but by a
 blessed
 troop of an-
 gelic spirits,
 sent down
 by the invo-
 cation of the
 guardian
 saint.

LXXX

For when it dawned—they dropped their
 arms,
 And clustered round the mast;
 Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
 mouths,
 And from their bodies passed.

LXXXI

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

LXXXII

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky⁵
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

LXXXIII

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

LXXXIV

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

LXXXV

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

⁵Happy sounds which come to the man atuned to life. Note how the images seem to tumble into his mind, how they suggest the quiet blessing he feels in being alive.

LXXXVI

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
 From the land of mist and snow,
 The spirit slid: and it was he
 That made the ship to go.
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

The lone-
 some Spirit
 from the
 south-pole
 carries on
 the ship as
 far as the
 Line, in
 obedience
 to the an-
 gelic troop,
 but still re-
 quireth ven-
 geance.

LXXXVII

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean:
 But in a minute she 'gan stir,
 With a short uneasy motion⁶—
 Backwards and forwards half her length
 With a short uneasy motion.

LXXXVIII

Then like a pawing horse let go,
 She made a sudden bound:
 It flung the blood into my head,
 And I fell down in a swoond.

LXXXIX

How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare;
 But ere my living life returned,
 I heard and in my soul discerned
 Two voices in the air.⁷

⁶Another interesting stanza for its rhythm; the added lines giving a sense of action delayed, the repeated line suggesting the forward and backward surge of the vessel.

⁷In the midst of actuality comes a further intrusion of the visionary.

The Polar
Spirit's fel-
low-de-
mons, the
invisible in-
habitants of
the ele-
ment, take
part in his
wrong; and
two of them
relate, one
to the other,
that pen-
ance long
and heavy
for the an-
cient Mar-
iner hath
been ac-
corded to
the Polar
Spirit, who
returneth
southward.

XC

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low,
The harmless Albatross.

XCI

'The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

XCII

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:^s
'Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

^sThere is a bewitching, fairy quality in this phrase "as soft as honey-dew," quite apposed to our general meaning when we speak of a honied voice. Coleridge was thinking of the delicacy of dream figures.

PART THE SIXTH

XCIII

FIRST VOICE

‘But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?’

XCIV

SECOND VOICE

‘Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

XCV

If he may know¹ which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.’

XCVI

FIRST VOICE

‘But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?’

SECOND VOICE

‘The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

The Mar-
iner hath
been cast
into a
trance; for
the angelic
power caus-
eth the ves-
sel to drive
northward
faster than
human life
could en-
dure.

¹In order that he may know.

XCVII

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
 Or we shall be belated:
 For slow and slow that ship will go,
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

XCVIII

The super-
 natural
 motion is
 retarded;
 the Mariner
 awakes, and
 his penance
 begins
 anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather:
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was
 high;
 The dead men stood together.

XCIX

All stood together on the deck,
 For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
 All fixed on me their stony eyes
 That in the Moon did glitter.

C

The pang, the curse, with which they
 died,
 Had never passed away:
 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
 Nor turn them up to pray.

CI

The curse
 is finally
 expiated

And now this spell was snapt: once
 more
 I viewed the ocean green,
 And looked far forth, yet little saw
 Of what had else been seen—

CII²

Like one, that on a lonesome road
 Doth walk in fear and dread,
 And having once turned round walks on,
 And turns no more his head;
 Because he knows, a frightful fiend
 Doth close behind him tread.

CIII

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
 Nor sound nor motion made:
 Its path was not upon the sea,
 In ripple or in shade.

CIV

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—
 It mingled strangely with my fears,
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

CV

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
 Yet she sailed softly too:
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
 On me alone it blew.

CVI

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
 The light-house top I see?³
 Is this the hill? is this the kirk?⁴
 Is this mine own countree?

And the
 ancient
 Mariner be-
 holdeth his
 native
 country.

²This is one of very few long similes in the poem. Compare it in quality with some in *Sohrab and Rustum*.

³Note that this is reverse order from the first mention of these objects. Why? Coleridge is an accurate observer in little things.

⁴An old Northern spelling of church, still used in Scotland.

CVII

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray—
 O let me be awake, my God!
 Or let me sleep away.

CVIII

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn!
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,
 And the shadow of the Moon.

CIX

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
 That stands above the rock:
 The moonlight steeped in silentness
 The steady weathercock.

CX

And the bay was white with silent light
 Till rising from the same,
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 In crimson colours came.

The angelic
 spirits leave
 the dead
 bodies,

CXI

A little distance from the prow
 Those crimson shadows were:
 I turned my eyes upon the deck—
 Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

And appear
 in their own
 forms of
 light.

CXII

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
 And, by the holy rood!⁵
 A man all light, a seraph-man,
 On every corse there stood.

⁵*Rood*—cross.

CXIII

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

CXIV

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

CXV⁶

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

CXVI

The Pilot, and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

CXVII

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

⁶From this point onward we get back to realities. Note how familiar the objects and persons and actions are in the next stanzas.

PART THE SEVENTH

CXVIII

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

The Hermit
of the wood

CXIX

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

CXX

The skiff-boat neared: I hear them talk,
‘Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and
fair,
That signal made but now?’

CXXI

‘Strange, by my faith!’ the Hermit
said—
‘And they answered not our cheer!
The planks look warped! and see those
sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

approach-
eth the ship
with won-
der.

CXXII

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest-brook along;
 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf
 below,
 That eats the she-wolf's young.'

CXXIII

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
 (The Pilot made reply)
 I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
 Said the Hermit cheerily.

CXXIV

The boat came closer to the ship,
 But I nor spake nor stirred;
 The boat came close beneath the ship,
 And straight a sound was heard.

CXXV

Under the water it rumbled on,
 Still louder and more dread:
 It reached the ship, it split the bay;
 The ship went down like lead.¹

The ship
 suddenly
 sinketh.

¹With this stanza the last link with possibility of proof for these strange things is gone. The story becomes the tale of a lost ship and no man is alive to tell how much of the mariner's tale is fact, how much the vision of a painful night-mare. He himself can hardly tell how he got into the rescue boat and to the land. These stanzas make the transition from the realm of the suffering spirit to the busy world of men.

The ancient
Mariner is
saved in the
Pilot's boat.

CXXVI

Stunned by that loud and dreadful
 sound,
 Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days
 drowned
 My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
 Within the Pilot's boat.

CXXVII

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
 The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
 Was telling of the sound.

CXXVIII

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked²
 And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes
 And prayed where he did sit.

CXXIX

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
 Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long,³ and all the
 while
 His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
 The Devil knows how to row.'

²Note how we get the effect of the mariner's appearance to others.

³A typical ballad phrase. cf. "Sir Patrick Spens "

CXXX

And now, all in my own countree,
 I stood on the firm land!
 The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
 And scarcely he could stand.

CXXXI

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
 The Hermit crossed his brow.
 'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
 What manner of man art thou?'

The ancient
 Mariner
 earnestly
 entreateth
 the Hermit
 to shrieve
 him; and
 the penance
 of life falls
 on him.

CXXXII

Forthwith this frame of mine was
 wrenched
 With a woful agony,
 Which forced me to begin my tale;
 And then it left me free.

CXXXIII

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
 That agony returns:
 And till my ghastly tale is told,
 This heart within me burns.

And ever
 and anon
 throughout
 his future
 life an
 agony con-
 straineth
 him to
 travel from
 land to
 land.

CXXXIV

I pass, like night, from land to land;⁴
 I have strange power of speech;
 That moment that his face I see,
 I know the man that must hear me;
 To him my tale I teach.

⁴The old curse is replaced by an obligation to teach the new truth he has learned.

CXXXV

What loud uproar bursts from that
door!⁵

The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

CXXXVI

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seeméd there to be.

CXXXVII

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

CXXXVIII

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

And to
teach, by
his own ex-
ample, love
and rever-
ence to all
things that
God made
and loveth.

CXXXIX

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell⁶
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

⁵We return to the setting of the first lines, almost forgotten in the experience we have shared with the mariner as he told his tale.

CXL

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

CXLI

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

CXLII

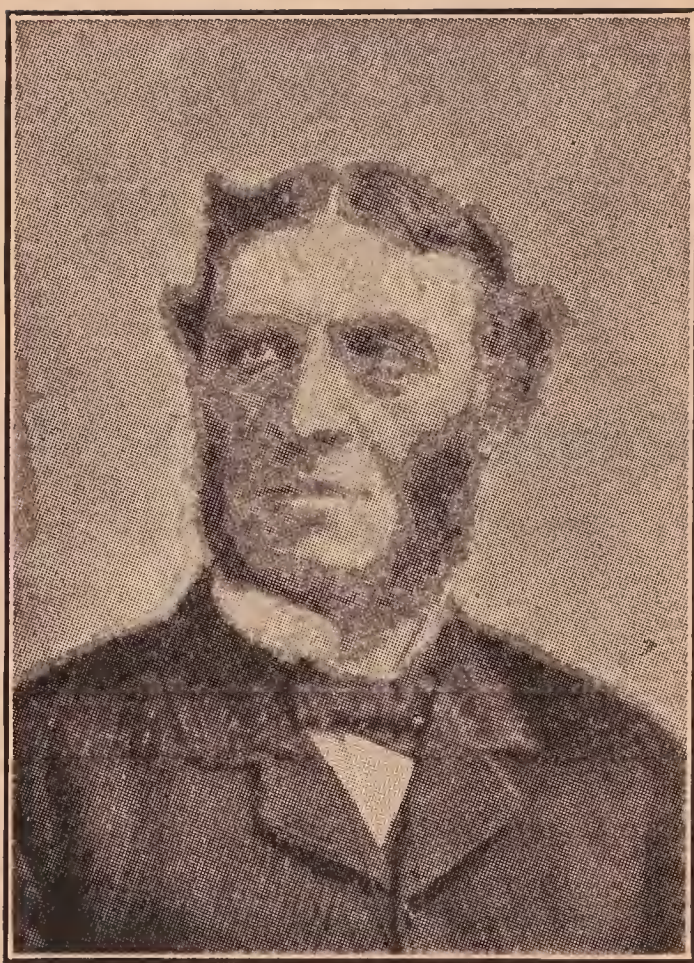
He went like one that hath been
stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:¹
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

¹These two stanzas make the moral of the poem explicit. Do you agree with Coleridge that it would be better left unsaid?

¹Repetition of the idea above. Forlorn—robbed of, or deprived; deprived of the power of feeling sensations.

Sohrab and Rustum

By Matthew Arnold



MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold, eldest son of the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold, Master of Rugby, was born on Christmas Eve of 1822 in the quiet village of Laleham in Middlesex. As a boy he was instructed by the master of a local private school, later by another at Winchester, and he received the last touches of preparation for college under his great father at Rugby. He seems not to have been popular with the boys during these school days, but his devotion to study kept him well at the top in contests for prizes in scholarship. Toward the end of the Rugby days he won the Balliol Open Scholarship, and at nineteen entered this most scholarly of the colleges of Oxford. The story of his University days is a record of successive achievement in scholarship, the most notable of which was the Newdigate prize for English verse.

His University life fell in the early days of the "Oxford Movement" fostered by an eager and questioning group of brilliant young men who were turning their best thoughts on the intellectual and spiritual condition of England and expressing themselves in ringing utterances. It was a stirring experience to be one of the group which included Thomas Hughes, Dean Church, the Froudes, John Henry Newman and Arthur Hugh Clough. His deepest friendship was with Clough, the poet whose death he mourned in "Thyrsis." Many lines in his poetry as well as his prose pay tribute to his love of the scholarly and inspiring atmosphere of Oxford in those formative years.

After graduation with honors in 1844 he was elected a fellow in Oriel College. For a time he taught at Rugby, but in 1847 he became private sec-

retary to the Earl of Lansdowne and probably considered entering political life. In 1851 he was appointed Inspector of Public Schools and became thereby identified with the educational interests of England permanently, for the duties he assumed then he filled during the rest of his rather long life.

This position involved the most arduous and at times painfully dull routine tasks, but Arnold seems to have preserved always a splendid sense of the necessity for patience and sympathy in dealing with the scores of teachers whose work came under his supervision. The work was enlarged by several trips to the continent to inquire into the school systems of other countries, and it resulted in the essay "Schools and Universities of the Continent" published after his first trip in 1859, with various other articles in criticism of the English public school system and the social conditions for which he felt that system was responsible. From 1857 to 1867 he also held the professorship of poetry at Oxford.

Twice during his inspectorship he visited America on lecture trips. On the first of these trips he lectured on Emerson, our foremost man of letters; during the second visit, in 1886, he lectured on the state of education in Europe. On this occasion Arnold made severe but honest criticism of the money-getting spirit of America which he felt was the great hindrance to the spread of a real culture among us, just as he had said the sordid instincts and blind prejudices of the middle classes in England were to blame for what he called the "Philistinism" of his own people. It is well to remember that Arnold was a sincere judge, genuinely concerned for the lack of great and effective ideals in the life of a people—his own and others.

The years of his maturity, from 1865 to his death

in 1888, Matthew Arnold devoted to an intense and sincere effort to awaken the English people to a sense of the most valuable things in life. He felt that the development of machinery and parties was sapping the spiritual strength of his nation, and he pled for what he termed the "disinterested endeavor to know the best which has been thought and said in the world" as a means to the culture which would offset materialism. His grief at the drift away from old religious faith led him to writing also on what he felt was the best and most lasting in religion. In both these fields, of culture and of religion, Arnold's was a pre-eminent voice in his day. No two volumes mean more as a record of high thinking than the treatises *Culture and Anarchy*, 1865, and *Literature and Dogma*, 1875, which show the two directions of his thought. He steadily looked forward to a more intelligent and artistic, and more moral world.

Meanwhile his career in poetry, which was the chosen field of the young man, had begun and ended. In length it was much shorter than the careers of Browning and Tennyson who represent for us now the leadership in poetry for the Victorian age. Arnold's best poetry was produced between 1853 when he published *Empedocles and Other Poems*, and the volume called *New Poems*, printed in 1869—a bare sixteen years.

Arnold's poetry deals with two subject matters chiefly. It reflects the great religious unrest of his age, the questions which the human heart yearns to have answered—a concern at any time, but especially poignant in Arnold's time when the new ideas of science were upsetting the dogmas of traditional religion. Arnold's poetry again and again deals with problems of life and death, the meaning

of existence and the life that comes after. Like many others, Arnold did not arrive at answers to the questions his spirit raised, and his poetry on the whole is tinged with melancholy which sometimes ends in resignation but never develops into robust faith. His verse will continue to be read because men will continue to face these abiding problems, and because as an artist in words he has given beautiful expression to this side of life.

But there is another interest in Arnold's poetry. A trained classicist, he tries to reproduce in certain of his poems the qualities he admired in Greek poetry, restraint and order. He is perhaps the greatest illustrator in England of the classic style—in the repose and simplicity and unity of his manner of thought. In subject matter he emphasizes the reality of the ideal element in human character, in form he stresses the impression of totality rather than the beauty of single parts.

He comes very close to his idea of the unity which pleases the poetical sense in his treatment of the story of *Sohrab and Rustum*. The poem deals with materials which stir our sympathy, and it presents its story in very simple and direct fashion. As an artist Arnold knows the value of the poet's devices—but these elements are made to contribute to one grand impression rather than at any time to claim attention to themselves. In action this poem moves forward with steady progress to its inevitable conclusion, and with the greatest simplicity of diction, it builds a majestic picture of the inexorableness of fate.

COMMENT ON SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

The episode of *Sohrab and Rustum* is found in the great epic of Persia, the *Shah Nameh* composed by the poet Firdusi late in the tenth century. The action of this old epic, which is to Persian literature what the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are to Greek, covers a period of some six centuries and comprises the achievements of a long line of kings who were the founders of the nation, and whose actions illustrate the ideals of the Persian people. Many of its incidents center around the hero Rustum and his wonderful horse Ruksh. The episode Arnold chooses to recount is the seventh in a series of twelve which make up the epic.

In choosing this episode Arnold has done what the great dramatists of the world have always done—he has chosen a stirring and decisive moment from a larger sequence of happenings, and, with sympathetic imagination has emphasized and intensified the human problem till we in reading feel all the hope and anxiety and suffering involved just as we do in witnessing a great tragedy on the stage. He has made us see the heroic aspiration of the young man and the powerful strength and pride of the old warrior, and in the event which involves them equally he has renewed our admiration for the courageous soul's acceptance of a hard fate. It is interesting in studying the poem to read it as one would a drama, watching for marked stages of development in clear-cut scenes all leading to a great tragic conclusion.

The suggestions and footnotes are put in as helps toward a fuller appreciation of one of the most state-ly narrative poems in English literature.

SELECTED LIST OF NAMES IN THE POEM¹

Ader-baijan—äzerbi yan: northernmost province of Persia.

Afrasiab—a fra' si yab: great leader, fabled to be of the house of Sur. At the time of this story his glory was waning before that of the house of Zal.

Ferood—fer rōōd': leader of the Persians.

Gudurz—gōō durz: a Persian counsellor.

Kai Khosroo—ki kos rōō': Persian king of the sixth century B. C. In his reign befell the episode of Sohrab and Rustum.

Khiva—kē' vä: desert province of Turkestan.

Pamere—pa mēr': "the roof of the world," in which Oxus takes its rise.

Peran Wisa—pē ran wi sä: Turanian chief, commander of Afrasiab's forces.

Ruksh—rooksh: mighty steed tamed by Rustum.

Rustum—rūs' tum.

Samarcand—säm är känd: once the capital of Timur's empire, today a center of Mohammedan learning.

Seistan—sās tän': city and lake in Afghanistan, named from Sarghis, a kind of wood abundant there.

Sohrab—sō räb'.

Tejend—te yend'.

Zal—zäl: “the aged,” said to be of the tribe of Benjamin; the father of Rustum. Born with snow white hair, a color odious to the Persians, he was exposed on the mountains and finally cared for by a marvelous bird, which in turn he chose for his symbol.

⁴Only important names or ones about which there might be uncertainty in pronunciation. It is essential that students should possess some feeling for the poetic value of these names, but not at all desirable that they should be held to exactness in rolling them off.

TOPICS AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- I. Considering the story as a great drama, note its features:
 - A. The enveloping mood of quietness in nature; the river and the camp. Read lines at the first and the last which establish this background.
 - B. Rather clearly marked stages of action, ending successively,
 - Part I, at line 93
 - Part II, at line 169
 - Part III, at line 259
 - Part IV, at line 397
 - Part V, at line 526Sum up briefly the action by parts, and try to discover the function of each in relation to the others.
- II. Make a list of similes in the poem: Compare them for length, for relation to objects in nature, and for the reference to moments in every day life. Try to decide which of these similes are most effective as adding to the mood of the story, which for sheer beauty of imagery.
- III. List aphorisms in the poem—terse statements of general truth growing out of the situation. Are they good bits of philosophy to remember? What is their effect in the poem? An example is l. 59 and there are many others.
- IV. In studying the two chief characters, watch for passages which reveal physical appearance, and those which reveal the qualities of mind,

the hopes and ideals of each. Then try to see how essential each such passage is to its place in the poem. Could any be shifted and not lose in effectiveness? Try some.

- V. Notice the proportionate space given to lines of direct narration, to pure description, and to dialogue or musing by the characters. Illustrate each.
- VI. If you were marking passages to remember or re-read, indicate your choices:
 - a. for beauty of sense impressions, sound, color, form,
and
 - b. for significance of ideas.
- VII. Can you sum up under one head the quality or feature of the poem which to you gives it greatest value?

Sohrab and Rustum

An Episode

"I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet: which is a good sign, but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments, instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say." . . . "All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and I think that it will be generally liked; though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it: a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others. But the story is a very noble and excellent one." From letters of Matthew Arnold to members of his family in April and May of 1853.

The story of Sohrab and Rustum is told in Sir John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, as follows:—

"The young Sohrab . . . had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and

bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days."

And¹ the first grey of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.²

¹The character of this story as an episode in a larger narrative is suggested by this Biblical use of the connective. cf. I Sam. xvii: 48. "And it came to pass when the Philistine arose . . ." Note further analogy in this usage ll. 8-11 below, and cf. the subsequent verses in the story of David. I Sam. xvii: 49-58.

²This is the modern river Amu Daria, an important navigable stream separating Turan from Iran. Note how it moves along the fringes of the story, like a living presence.

But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plung'd in
sleep;

Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long 5
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed.

But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,
And went abroad into the cold wet fog, 10
Through the dim camp, to Peran-Wisa's³ tent.
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd,
which stood

Clustering like bee-hives⁴ on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere; 15
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low
strand,

And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a
boat,

Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the
land.

The men of former times had crown'd the top 20
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.

³This name, like others in the poem, belongs to actual oriental history. The sound quality of these names adds much to the tone and Old-World atmosphere of the tale. These characters may be identified by reference to the introduction, but for an appreciation of the story it is well to remember only such names as stand out and in most cases explain themselves.

⁴This simile is the first of a number of figures Arnold uses, in the manner of the old epic writers, to enhance the beauty of his poem. Note how clear the picture is, and how close to things we know.

And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
 Upon the thick-piled⁵ carpets in the tent,
 And found the old man sleeping on his bed
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's
 sleep; ⁶

And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—

‘Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
 Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?’

But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—

‘Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe 35
 Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
 Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
 For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
 Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
 In Samarcand, before the army march'd; 40
 And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
 Thou know'st if,' since from Ader-baijan first
 I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
 I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
 At my boy's years, the courage of a man. 45
 This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the
 world,

And beat the Persians back on every field,
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
 Rustum, my father; who I hop'd should greet, 50
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought
 field

⁵What does *piled* mean here?

⁶Careful observation of a common-place fact. This is not the sleeplessness of the youth touched on in l. 36.

⁷We say *whether* . . . How much do these lines tell of the motive of Sohrab's action?

His not unworthy, not inglorious son.⁸
 So I long hoped, but him I never find.
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
 Let the two armies rest to-day; but I⁹ 55
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
 To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
 Rustum will surely hear it: if I fall—
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight, 60
 Where host meets host, and many names are
 sunk:

But of a single combat fame speaks clear.'
 He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand¹⁰
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—
 'O! Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
 And share the battle's common chance with us
 Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
 In single fight incurring single risk,¹¹
 To find a father thou hast never seen? 70
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
 And when 't is truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
 To seek out Rustum—seek him not through
 fight! 75
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!

⁸Note the piled-up rhetoric of these repetitions. What do they show of the emotion of the youth? How do they prepare for the later tragedy?

⁹Other challenges make interesting comparison here: *The Iliad*, Bk. III, and I Sam. xvii:4-10.

¹⁰Some readers think this act unnatural. Do you?

¹¹Note the repetition here and in ll. 75-6 below, and compare with ll. 6-16 above. What is the effect? Find other illustrations.

But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
 For now it is not as when I was young,
 When Rustum was in front of every fray: 80
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
 In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.

Whether that his own mighty strength at last
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,
 Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.¹² 85
 There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart fore-
 bodes¹³

Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though
 lost

To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
 To seek thy father, not seek single fights 90
 In vain:—But who can keep the lion's cub
 From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires.'

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and
 left

His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay; 95
 And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;
 And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap, 100
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;¹⁴
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.

¹²Lines 79-85 give information necessary to the later action. The brooding nature of Rustum is emphasized more directly later.

¹³This foreboding is a very effective element in drama. Arnold added it to the story here as direct preparation. Do you like it?

¹⁴A town in Bokhara noted for its fleeces. We prize caracul as a rich fur to-day.

The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands. 105
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
 From their black tents, long files of horse, 110
 they stream'd;

As when some grey November morn the files,
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
 Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
 Or some frore¹⁵ Caspian reed-bed, southward 115
 bound

For the warm Persian sea-board—so they
 stream'd.

The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
 First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long
 spears;

Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara
 come

And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.¹⁶ 120
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the
 south,

The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells. 125
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who
 came

From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks

¹⁵From the participle of the Anglo-Saxon verb *freosan*, to freeze.

¹⁶"Koumiss," made from the fermented milk of mares, was a drink much used in Persia.

Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
 And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder
 hordes 130

Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
 Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who
 stray

Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere—
 These all ¹⁷ filed out from camp into the plain. 135

And on the other side of Persians form'd:—
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
 The Ilyats of Khorassan; and behind,
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
 Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.¹⁸ 140

But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where
 they stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—
 'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear! 150
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
 But choose a champion¹⁹ from the Persian lords
 To fight our champion, Sohrab, man to man.'

¹⁷Note the effect of massing these lines suggest, and the picture involved, with the contrast of more brilliant forces on the Persian side. Is your interest enlisted more for one side than the other?

¹⁸A good line to read aloud. What literary device is used to get the effect intended? It is more slightly used in l. 152 again.

¹⁹Similar incidents are found in the story of David in I Sam. 17, and in *Iliad*, Bk. III.

As, in the country, on a morn in June,
 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears, 155
 A shiver runs through the deep corn ²⁰ for joy—
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.

But as²¹ a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
 That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk
 snow;

Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
 Choked by the air, and scarce can they them- 165
 selves

Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulber-
 ries—

In single file they move, and stop their breath,
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging
 snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.

And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up 170
 To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
 Second, and was the uncle of the King;
 These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz
 said:—

'Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge 175
 up,

Yet champion have we none to match this youth.

²⁰Used in the sense of 'grain.' Only in America has the word a limited meaning.

²¹Try reading this long simile aloud, noting the sustained control of voice it demands.

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.²
 But Rustum came last night; aloof³ he sits
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear 180
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's
 name;

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge
 up.'

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and
 cried:—

'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said! 185
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'

He spake; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and 190
 reach'd,

Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.⁴
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
 Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found 195
 Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
 The table stood before him, charged with food—
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
 And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate²⁵
 Listless, and held a falcon²⁶ on his wrist,

²²Achilles was described as "swift of foot," "fiery-hearted." What qualities do the phrases attribute to the young champion?

²³This sullen brooding of a disaffected leader suggests Achilles. *Iliad*, Bk. I, l. 348.

²⁴Why this list of details?

²⁵Old form of "sat."

²⁶Falconry was practiced 1700 years before Christ, and remains a favorite sport in parts of Asia.

And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,
And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and
said:—

‘Welcome! these eyes could see no better 205
sight.

What news? but sit down first, and eat and
drink.’

But Gudurz stood in the tent-door, and
said:—

‘Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze; 210
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his
name—

Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy²⁷ might is this young man's! 215
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!’

He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a
smile:—

‘Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older; if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honours younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves. 225
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's
fame?

²⁷Indirect preparation for later incidents.

For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have— 230
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age. 235
There would I go, and hang my armour up,
And with my great name fence that weak old
man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,
And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings, 240
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword
no more.'

He spoke, and smil'd; and Gudurz made reply:—

'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks, 245
Hidest thy face? Take heed²⁸ lest men should
say:

*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men.'*²⁹

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—

'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words? 250
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?

²⁸Lines 229-41 make a companion passage to that which emphasizes Sohrab's restless longing to find his father. Both establish sympathy for the central figures in the tragedy.

²⁹Note the arguments used to stir the old champion.

But who for men of nought would do great 255
deeds?

Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his
fame!

But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;³⁰

Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man.'

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and 260
ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—

Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.

But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd

His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,

And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose 265

Were plain, and on his shield was no device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,

And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume

Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.

So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse, 270

Follow'd him like a faithful hound, at heel—

Ruksh,³¹ whose renown was noised through all
the earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once

Did in Bokhara by the river find

A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home, 275

³⁰How do these conditions affect the later action?

³¹Another poem tells the story of Rustum and his horse. As a young warrior he had looked long for a steed of might and had tried many. Finally he discovered among the wild flocks of Cabul a beautiful rose-colored steed whom no rider had been able to mount, until Rustum as if predestined his master made him his own and thereby fulfilled the prophecy that by the aid of a steed he should be master of the world. Other famous horses in literature are Xanthus of Achilles, Bucephalus of Alexander, Aquiline of Ramond in *Jerusalem Delivered*, Babieca of the *Cid*, and the horse of the great satire *Don Quixote*.

And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were
 work'd

All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters
 know.

So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd 280

The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.

And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
 Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.

And dear as the wet diver³² to the eyes
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,— 285

By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf

Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,

Having made up his tale³³ of precious pearls,

Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—

So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came. 290

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,

And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.

And as afield the reapers cut a swath

Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,

And on each side are squares of standing corn, 295

And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—

So on each side were squares of men, with
 spears

Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.

And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast

His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw 300

Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor
 drudge

³²The first of four long figures put in to delay the movement of the story. Are they effective?

³³Like our word toll, from Anglo-Saxon *talian*, "to reckon."

Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her
 fire
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn, 305
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-
 panes,
 And wonders how she lives, and what the
 thoughts
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from
 afar
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth 310
 All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
 Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and
 straight,
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws 315
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood, 320
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and
 said:³⁴—
 'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron, 325
 And tried; and I have stood on many a field
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.

³⁴Lines 322-44 are employed to fill in the human background and build up the feeling of kinship which adds strong pathos to the later action. Try to picture the scene. Note the contrasts of strong human yearning and warrior's pride on both sides.

O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be govern'd! quit the Tartar host, and come 330
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die!
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'

So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw 335
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first grey hairs; hope fill'd his
soul— 340

And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasp'd his hand within his own, and
said:—

'Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!
Art thou not Rustum? speak: art thou not he?'
But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth, 345
And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul:—

'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may
mean!

False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys:
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say: *Rustum is here!* 350
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword, perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall, 355
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
'I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dar'd: then he and I 360
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'

So will ne speak, perhaps, while men applaud.
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through
me.'

And then he turn'd, and sternly spake
aloud:—

'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus 365
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or
yield!

Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand 370
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this—
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield, 375
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till
winds

Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away.'

He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his
feet:—

'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so! 380
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence,³⁵ and we stand here.
Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I, 385
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of
Heaven.³⁶

³⁵This device, of statement contrary to fact, is very effective in dramatic situations in which the audience knows more than the actors involved.

³⁶Emphasis on the part fate plays in human affairs. It is enlarged in ll. 390-96 below.

And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea, 390
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
 And whether it will heave us up to land,
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death, 395
 We know not, and no search will make us know;
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.'

He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
 His spear; down from the shoulder, down it
 came,

As on some partridge in the corn a hawk, 400
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
 Drops like a plummet;³⁷ Sohrab saw it come,
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
 Which it sent flying wide;—then Sohrab threw 405
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp
 rang,

The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
 And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none but he
 Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
 Still rough like those which men in treeless
 plains— 410

To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,³⁸
 And strewn the channels with torn boughs—so
 huge 415
 The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck

³⁷Is this figure accurate?

³⁸Wreck, havoc.

One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,³⁹
 Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
 Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's
 hand.

And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell 420
 To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the
 sand;

And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his 425
 sword,

And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he lay
 Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand:
 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his
 sword,

But courteously drew back, and spoke, and
 said:—

'Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will
 float

Upon the summer-floods, and not my bones.

But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;

No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul,⁴⁰ 430

Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum; be it so!

Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?

Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—

Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,

And heard their hollow roar of dying men; 435

But never was my heart thus touch'd before.

Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the
 heart?

O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!

Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,

And make a truce, and sit upon this sand, 440

And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,

³⁹These lines should be read aloud to get the full value of their sound as adapted to meaning and mood.

⁴⁰Lines 430-47 reiterate the effect of kinship felt but not understood by the two combatants.

And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou 445
Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy
spear!

But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had
risen,

And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his 'spear, 450
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,
The baleful sign of fevers; dust nad soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his
voice 455

Was chok'd with rage; at last these words broke
way:—

'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now 460
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to
dance;

But on the Oxus-sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine! 465
Remember all thy valour; try thy feints
And cunning! All the pity I had is gone;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the
hosts

With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's
wiles.'

He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts, 470

And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
 Together, as two eagles on one prey
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,
 One from the east, one from the west; their
 shields

Dash'd with a clang together, and din 475

Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.

And you would say that sun and stars took part 480
 In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud

Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair. 485

In gloom they twain were wrapp'd,⁴¹ and they
 alone;

For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
 And the sun sparkled⁴² on the Oxus stream.
 But in the gloom they fought,⁴³ with bloodshot
 eyes 490

And labouring breath; first Rustum struck the
 shield

Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked
 spear

Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the
 skin,

And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.

⁴¹This is a definite epic imitation. cf. *Iliad*, III, 465-69; *Aeneid*, I, 497-99; *Faerie Queene*, I, v. stanza 13.

⁴²Again the stream reflects a mood—here in relief at the most intense moment of the tragedy.

⁴³The next lines represent very rapid action, all objective in contrast to the representation of the state of mind of the heroes earlier recounted.

Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's
 helm, 495
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the
 crest
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,
 Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
 And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air, 500
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh,⁴⁴ the
 horse,
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:—
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
 Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
 Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side, 505
 And comes at night to die upon the sand—
 The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd for
 fear,
 And Oxus curdled⁴⁵ as it cross'd his stream.
 But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd 510
 His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
 Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
 And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
 Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing
 spear, 515
 And shouted *Rustum!*⁴⁶—Sohrab heard that
 shout,

⁴⁴The horse is added to the background. cf. other scenes in which the sympathy of animal servants is depicted: *Julius Caesar*. I. iii; *Iliad*, Bk XIX; Numbers XXII.

⁴⁵An example of "pathetic fallacy," used here to suggest the complete sympathy between nature and the human actors, and to intensify the effect of the conflict.

⁴⁶This battle shout is an effective introduction to the scene which follows—the most powerful moment in the action.

And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one step,
 And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing
 form;
 And then he stood bewilder'd, and he dropp'd
 His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd his
 side. 520
 He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to the
 ground;
 And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
 And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
 The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair;—
 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet, 525
 And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
 'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
 A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent. 530
 Or else that the great Rustum would come down
 Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
 His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
 And then that all the Tartar host would praise
 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame, 535
 To glad⁴⁷ thy father in his weak old age.
 Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
 Dearer to the red jackals⁴⁸ shalt thou be
 Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:— 540
 'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
 No! Rustum slays⁴⁹ me, and this filial heart.
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
 And I were that which till to-day I was, 545

⁴⁷What form of this verb would we use to-day?

⁴⁸This expression of the conqueror is like the Philistine's boast to David, "I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field." I Sam. xvii, 44.

⁴⁹In what sense?

They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe. 550
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear;
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!' 555
As when some hunter⁵⁰ in the spring hath
found

A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell 560
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams 565
Chiding his mate back to her nest, but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers—never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it; 570
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy screams as she sails by—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not. 575
And, with a cold incredulous voice, he said:—

⁵⁰Compare this simile with others in the poem for beauty and richness of suggestion.

‘What prate is this of fathers⁵¹ and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son.’

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
‘Ah yes, he had! and that lost son, am I. 580

Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from
here;

And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee. 585
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance
be?

Oh, could I live till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells . 590
With that old King, her father, who grows grey
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honour, when the war is done. 595
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,⁵²
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;
But that in battle with a nameless foe, 600
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.’

He spoke; and as he ceas’d, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke;⁵³ but Rustum listen’d, plunged in
thought.

⁵¹From this point the dramatic solution is rapid and definite.

⁵²Noised abroad. Note the suggestion of how news travels.

⁵³This repetition is Homeric.

Nor did he yet believe it was his son 605
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he
 knew;

For he had had sure tidings⁵⁴ that the babe,
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear 610
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
 By a false boast, the style⁵⁵ of Rustum's son;
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
 So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in
 thought;

And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
 At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
 For he remember'd his own early youth,⁵⁶
 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn, 620
 The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,
 Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
 And that old king, her father, who loved well 625
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
 They three, in that long-distant summer-time—
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills 630
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,

⁵⁴This exposition comes late. Is it essential, or did we know its facts before?

⁵⁵Title.

⁵⁶The next twenty lines add still further to our knowledge of the past—this part a pleasant picture of the young Rustum.

Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut, 635
 Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
 And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
 On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and
 said:— 640

‘O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have
 loved!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
 Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum’s son.
 For Rustum had no son; one child⁵⁷ he had, 645
 But one—a girl; who with her mother now
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.’

But Sohrab answer’d him in wrath; for now
 The anguish of the deep-fix’d spear grew fierce, 650
 And he desir’d to draw forth the steel,
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

‘Man, who art thou who dost deny my words? 655
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,⁵⁸
 And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
 I tell thee, prick’d⁵⁹ upon this arm I bear
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,

⁵⁷Note how Rustum’s mind returns to this point. Why?

⁵⁸Another aphoristic line.

⁵⁹In the *Shah Nameh* the identification came through an onyx amulet the youth wore. For Arnold’s purpose it was not necessary to have an object of supernatural force such as that stone which incited its wearer to valor. The motivation is more natural here, the means of identification more simple.

That she might prick it on the babe she bore.' 660

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's
cheeks,

And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,

That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud;

And to his heart he press'd the other hand, 665

And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—

'Sohrab, that were a proof which could not
lie!

If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.'

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm, 670

And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points

Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,

Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,

An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,

And all day long, and, when night comes, the 675
lamp

Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands:

So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd

On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.

It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,⁶⁰

Rustum's great father, whom they left to die, 680

A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks;

Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and
loved—

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.

And Sohrab bar'd that image on his arm,

And himself scann'd it long with mournful 685
eyes,

And then he touch'd it with his hand, and
said:—

⁶⁰These lines refer to the story of Zal, reared by the griffin after he had been left to perish because he was born with white hair.

'How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper
 sign
 Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'
 He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and
 stood
 Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:
O boy—thy father!—and his voice choked there.
 And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,
 And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
 But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips, 695
 And with fond⁶¹ faltering fingers stroked his
 cheeks,
 Trying to call him back to life; and life
 Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
 And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
 In both his hands the dust which lay around, 700
 And threw it on his head,⁶² and smirch'd his
 hair,—
 His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering
 arms;
 And strong convulsive groanings shook his
 breast,
 And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his
 sword,
 To draw it, and for ever let life out. 705
 But Sohrab saw his thought,⁶³ and held his
 hands,
 And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:—
 'Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day

⁶¹Effective alliteration here and in the next line.

⁶²In the Orient this custom is the expression for extreme grief. References abound in the Bible; a striking one is found in the *Iliad* Bk. XXII, 530-40 in Priam's grief for his son Hector.

⁶³Meaning?

The doom which at my birth was written
down⁶⁴

In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious 710
hand.

Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear. 715

But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father; let me feel that I have found!
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: *My son!* 720

Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, like a passing wind;
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.' 725

So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh,
the horse,

With his head bowing to the ground, and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute
woe⁶⁵

First to the one then to the other moved
His head, as if enquiring what their grief

⁶⁴These lines echo earlier ones which suggest man's inability to escape his fate.

⁶⁵Again animal sympathy for man in pain. It is emphasized for dramatic effect, as a parallel situation is in the *Iliad*, Bk. IX; but we all have known cases less pronounced among our friends and their animal companions. Can you cite some?

Might mean; and from his dark, compassion- 735
ate eyes,

The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the
sand.

But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and
said:—

‘Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh, thy
feet

Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
When first they bore thy master to this field!’ 740

But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said;—
‘Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee. 745
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!

O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,⁶⁶ 750

And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said: *O Ruksh, bear Rustum well!*—but *I* 755
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd
face,

Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund
stream;

But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen

⁶⁶The following lines illustrate the yearnings of the child to know places and characters and objects which are associated with his hero-father. The passage of course is further exposition but Arnold makes it come naturally into the mind of the dying youth.

Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand, 760
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk
 The desert rivers: Moorghab and Tejend,
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
 The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream, 765
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd:—
 'Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
 Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!' 770

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—

'Desire not that, my father! thou must live.
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
 As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.
 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do, 775
 And reap a second glory in thine age:
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
 But come! thou seest this great host of men
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!'
 Let me entreat for them: what have they done? 780
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with
 them,
 But carry me with thee to Seistan,
 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me, 785
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy
 friends.

And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,

⁶⁷Can you cite other instances in which the dying leader begs of his conqueror the lives of his followers? It is a final touch of the heroic in the young man's character. Rustum heeded his son's request.

And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
 That so the passing horseman on the waste 790
 May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!
 And I be not forgotten in my grave.'

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:— 795
 'Fear not! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
 So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,
 And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me.
 And carry thee away to Seistan,⁶⁸
 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee, 800
 With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.
 And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
 And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave. 805
 And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
 What should I do with slaying any more?
 For would that all that I have ever slain
 Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes, 810
 And they who were call'd champions in their
 time,
 And through whose death I won that fame I
 have—

And I were nothing but a common man,
 A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son! 815
 Or rather would that I, even I myself,
 Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
 Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
 Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan; 820

⁶⁸Note the repetition. It has the quality of a Biblical chant here.

And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
 And say: *O son, I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!
 But now in blood and battles was my youth,
 And full of blood and battles is my age, 825
 And I shall never end this life of blood.'

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
 'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful ⁶³ man!
 But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
 Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day, 830
 When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
 Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,
 Returning home over the salt blue sea,
 From laying thy dear master in his grave.'

And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and 835
 said:—

'Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
 Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure.'

He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him, and took
 The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
 His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood 840
 Came welling from the open gash, and life
 Flow'd with the stream;—all down his cold
 white side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
 Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank, 845
 By children whom their nurses call with haste
 Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd
 low,
 His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he
 lay—

White, with eyes clos'd; only when heavy gasps,

⁶³In the sense of one who inspires dread—the original meaning of the word.

Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his 850
frame,

Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd them,
And fixed them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his
limbs

Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left, 855
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead:
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd 860
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So, in the sand, lay Rustum by his son.

And night⁷⁰ came down over the solemn waste, 865
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,
Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now 870
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.

But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,

⁷⁰As if the curtain were falling on the great drama. Life goes on—the larger world stirs with its old activity—but the victims of the conflict sit in lonely grief. Still there is strength and hope in the image of the mighty river moving on as if to restore the balanced rhythm of life.

Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjé,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands
begin

To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles— 885
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and
wide

His luminous home of waters opens, bright 890
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed
stars

Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

Objectives. The objectives in teaching these narrative poems, one a literary ballad and the other a short epic, are to see that *each* pupil *knows* and *values* these units. To know them and to value them, the pupils will have to comprehend them as wholes, and then in parts or details as seems wise to the teacher, considering the time allowed for the study and the age and capacity of the pupils. A child can be taught to understand the general large aspects of a poem, where an adult, or a teacher, or a poet can see much more in the way of technical detail and the criticism of life. Any child, however, to use a figure of speech, can be taught that the way to judge an apple is not alone by its outside appearance, but also by its taste, or by cutting into it. A good apple has no rotten spots and no moulded core. A good poem is good down to the last bite. The poems printed here will bear the test. Rapid reading will show the outside appearance; slow reading and study will reveal that these poems are good through and through.

Methods. Provide a careful, interesting approach. Prepare the soil before you sow the seed. Some preliminary talk about the difference between traditional ballads and imitative or literary ballads will provide an approach to the understanding of *The Ancient Mariner*. Place the poem in the history of lyrical poetry (*Lyrical Ballads*, 1798). And place it in the history of balladry (Percy's *Reliques*, 1765, started a movement). Some adult may explain to you or for the class why he likes the work of Coleridge. A friend told the writer that a gift book, an illustrated copy of *The Ancient Mariner*, influenced him to read and read again this story.

For *Sohrab and Rustum*, a little discussion of

epic poetry may provide an interesting approach. The epic often begins in the middle of a story. The characters are noble, the deeds worthy, the expressions serious and dignified. The similes and metaphors are classical in form; they are drawn from the very stuff of the story. The setting, the plot and the characters may be noted separately, but comparison will show that these elements work in harmony together.

Outlining. A good way to master the contents of a long poem is to outline it. The effort of using a pen and paper will assist the memory. Moreover, outlining will reveal the coherence and movement of the poem as well as the unity and the climax. It will be evident to those who analyze or outline these poems, that they obey many of the laws of story or play, and to the pupils, the comparison in structure may be interesting and profitable.

Details. The study of details is like looking at an object with a microscope. In life, the masses of us have no time for microscopic study. In school, we often try to provide a little time for that. You may consider that your class is not capable of much study of details. If you do try to have the class see the trees as well as the wood, before you leave the forest entirely, take one last look at the wood in perspective. That is, after you analyze, synthesize, review the general impression.

Enjoyment. We all enjoy good stories. We sense the objective of a story, the forward movement, the pictures along the way, the tests imposed upon the characters. and many technical matters. We like to hear stories read by those who do appreciate the stories themselves, those who can bring out with

the voice fine shades of meaning. Read aloud, visualize the pictures, watch for the poet's own comment, memorize good quotations.

Conclusion. If you, teacher, have an opportunity to teach these poems to children who are reading them for the first time, we congratulate you. You have a pleasant task before you. Your work is well worth while.

The General Editors.

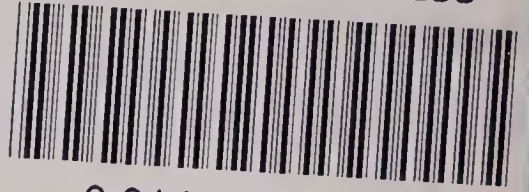
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